

CITY COUNCIL

Public Safety, Public Works and Neighborhood Services Committee

Monday, April 15, 2013

**Agenda
5:00 p.m.**

The Public Safety, Public Works and Neighborhood Services Committee's area of responsibility includes Police, Fire, Neighborhood Parks, Neighborhood Revitalization, Community Development, Code Enforcement and Graffiti Abatement efforts, Community Group Organization and Support

Committee Members: Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz (Chair), Jeff Waltman (Vice Chair) and Stratton Marmarou

Although Council committee meetings are open to the public, public comment is not permitted at Council Committee meetings. However, citizens are encouraged to attend and observe the meetings. Comment from citizens or professionals during the meeting may be solicited on agenda topics via invitation by the Committee Chair.

All electronic recording devices must be at the entry door in all meeting rooms and offices, as per Bill No. 27-2012

I. Review Monthly Reports

- Police – Bi-monthly starting May 2013
- Fire Suppression – Bi-Monthly starting in June
- Fire Marshal – investigations and inspections – Bi-Monthly starting in June
- EMS –Bi-monthly starting in April
- WWTP – Bi-Monthly starting in July
- Utilities – Bi-Monthly starting in July
- Streets/Parks/Property Maintenance – Bi-Monthly starting in July

II. Status of City-owned Property List

a. Request for an Asset Inventory

III. Providing EMS Service to Outlying Municipalities *(transferred from Finance Agenda as per Man. Dir)*

IV. Capital Repairs to Library – C. Snyder

V. Street Light Assessment – C. Snyder

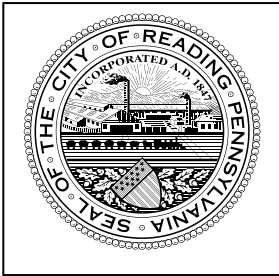
VI. Fleet Management – C. Snyder

VII. Update re Street Lighting in Wyomissing Park area – C. Snyder

VIII. Yard Waste Collection – E. Lloyd

Follow-up Issues:

- Storm Water Utility (PW 19)
- Seek Sponsorships for parks and park maintenance (PW 11)
- Former Police Academy Building
- Establish and Enforce a Utility Cut Program (PW 15) – in progress
- Fleet Maintenance Contract with Neighboring Municipalities (PW 03)
- Inventory of Lease Agreements (PW11) – in progress
- Capital Repairs to Library – in progress
- Managing all street lights (PW 21)
- Egelman's Park
- Egelman's Dam
- Ordinance Regulating Utilities in City Streets
- Street Lighting in Wyomissing Park area – in progress
- Police Force Manning Levels and Crime Trends – quarterly – next update April
- Update re In-sourced Recycling Collection
- Standards to Establish a Crime Watch
- UGI Meter Relocation
- Pagoda Foundation
- Angelica Lease Agreements
- River Road Extension Project
- Nuisance Bar Strategies



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***Monday, March 18, 2013
Meeting Report***

Committee Members Attending: S. Marmarou, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, J. Waltman

Others Attending: S. Katzenmoyer, C. Jones, Dr. Reed, D. Sterner, R. Corcoran, L. Kelleher, B. Rivera, C. Younger, J. Montgomery, K. Brautigan, H. Tangredi, C. Zale, T. Wargo, M. Bembenick, D. Cituk

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, Chair, called the Public Safety, Public Works and Neighborhood Services Committee meeting to order. The Committee met as a Committee of the Whole.

Update on Gas Meter Issue

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for a legal update. She questioned the status of the legal research and noted that additional safety and permitting concerns have been learned. Mr. Montgomery stated that both plumbing and mechanical are involved in the meter issue.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that there are many items relating to this issue.

Mr. Brautigan stated that many of the relocated meters have been moved very close to the street. He stated that in many cases there is four feet or less between the meter and the curb.

Ms. Kantner arrived at this time.

Mr. Brautigan stated that this is an unsafe position and that there are also protection issues. He stated that the external meters should be protected and that a representative

from the PA PUC will be visiting Reading to examine the relocated meters. He stated that because of a recent auto accident, the Fire Department is now also involved.

Mr. Spencer and Chief Heim arrived at this time.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz requested that the email from the Fire Marshall be forwarded to Ms. Kelleher for distribution to City Council.

Mr. Brautigan stated that no permits were pulled from Building Trades for the relocations of the meters. He reviewed several sections of the PUC regulations regarding hazards and placement. He stated that there are also additional issues in historic districts.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned how high-risk vandalism areas would be defined. Mr. Brautigan deferred to Chief Heim.

Mr. Montgomery stated that there are also permitting and safety issues with the plumbing code. He stated that the contractors performing the meter relocations are not City licensed and do not get permits or inspections. He stated that these are life safety issues in regards to the natural gas. He stated that some progress has been made and recommended working together to move the issue forward.

Mr. Brautigan stated that for new installations he has begun to not allow the gas to be turned on until the inspections are complete. He stated that there are also many new installations being performed without permits.

Mr. Waltman arrived at this time.

Mr. Brautigan stated that he is following this same process with the re-introduction of natural gas in situations when the lines were abandoned.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned the number of meters which have been relocated. Mr. Brautigan stated that he has started with the most recent work and is working his way backward. He stated that he has addressed back to 2011. He stated that he is also facing 12 – 15 new installs monthly.

Mr. Waltman questioned the permit process. Mr. Brautigan stated that the UCC mechanical code requires a licensed contractor who must come to City Hall and apply and pay for a permit. He stated that after the permit is issued, that he must inspect the installation before the natural gas can be turned on.

Mr. Wargo stated that it is all about structural safety.

Mr. Waltman stated that many legal questions remain. He requested that not too many permits be issued for the relocations until the legal questions are answered.

Mr. Acosta arrived at this time.

Mr. Montgomery stated that PUC representatives have stated that they will be following up with UGI.

Mr. Waltman noted that the City cannot send a mixed message. He noted the many unresolved issues.

Mr. Brautigan stated that he has been trying to address the safety concerns with the PUC for 18 months. He stated that the regulator needs to be external but relocating the entire meter is not necessary.

Mr. Acosta stated that the meters look horrible.

Mr. Sterner stated that the PUC regulations are not being followed. Mr. Brautigan agreed and stated that he is to meet with the PUC and UGI in the near future. Mr. Montgomery noted the need for legal representation and public safety officials to also attend this meeting.

Mr. Wargo stated that the valve shut-off in the street is also not functioning.

Mr. Marmarou described the injury of a resident who walked into and tripped on a meter.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that there are many issues and that the City should have the same focus and a united voice.

Mr. Acosta stated that the City is not using the authority that it has. He stated that other cities do not seem to have the same problems with UGI. He stated that UGI representatives met with Council and stated that there are other meter options. The other options are not being utilized.

Mr. Brautigan stated that trades should have been informed when permission was given for the street cuts.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that UGI is not giving notice to the City as they move around the neighborhoods. She noted the hazards created by equipment, metal plates, etc.

Mr. Acosta noted the need for all departments to be informed of large projects. He noted the need for better control and their need for permits.

Mr. Brautigan stated that he is having difficulty keeping up.

Mr. Waltman noted the need to keep the Managing Director informed of this project. He stated that UGI is moving quickly and that there are still many questions. He suggested stopping UGI until all these issues are addressed as they are creating safety hazards.

Mr. Wargo stated that visual covers are aesthetic but they do not address the safety issues.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for a legal update.

Mr. Sterner noted the need for UGI to follow the PUC regulations. He noted the need for the PUC to address UGI.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for an executive session. Mr. Younger stated that this is possible as it would pertain to potential legislation.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz requested that City staff remain for the discussion.

Mr. Spencer questioned if Ms. Snyder requested trades staff attend this meeting. The trades staff stated that she did not.

Mr. Spencer noted the need for all City staff to attend meetings as directed by the Managing Director. He stated that Ms. Snyder has been out of town.

Mr. Lloyd arrived at this time.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need to keep Ms. Snyder informed.

Council entered executive session at 5:31 pm to discuss potential litigation. Council exited executive session at 5:45 pm.

Mr. Spencer questioned who requested trades staff to attend this meeting. Ms. Kelleher stated that she made the request by email after learning that the Plumbing Board was also addressing the meter issue and copied Ms. Snyder and the Mayor's staff.

Mr. Spencer stated that this caused confusion. He stated that Ms. Kelleher is not following protocol. Mr. Acosta requested to address this issue privately. He requested a copy of the email.

Mr. Spencer stated that the Managing Director allows staff to attend meetings.

Egelman's Lease

Mr. Marmarou questioned the amount of electricity used at this facility. Mr. Jones stated that the City is billed for each facility separately.

Mr. Marmarou suggested amending the lease to require the electricity bills be paid monthly. Mr. Younger reviewed the lease and stated that electricity costs will now be paid by the Egelman's Park Association.

Mr. Spencer stated that cash flow issues may prevent them from paying on a monthly basis.

Mr. Acosta requested an update on the issue before Council action is taken at the March 25 meeting.

Update on River Road Extension Project

Mr. Jones stated that the project scope has changed now that Car Tech has purchased additional property. He stated that the new proposed route will circle under the Schuylkill Ave bridge and loop through the area near Windsor and Ritter streets. He stated that the intersection at Schuylkill Ave and Windsor St will also be reconfigured.

Mr. Jones stated that there is an RFP to select a design firm. He stated that the draft reimbursement agreement with PennDOT must be changed due to the change in scope. He explained that PennDOT will pay the invoices and bill the City for its share.

Mr. Waltman stated that money has already been spent on this project. Mr. Jones stated that \$200,000 has been spent on a study and that the additional funding is available through RATS.

Mr. Spencer stated that this plan depends on ownership of land not currently owned by

the City.

Mr. Jones stated that this is unknown until the design is completed.

Council entered an executive session to discuss real estate acquisition at 6:30 pm and exited at 6:52 pm.

Nuisance Bar Strategies

Chief Heim stated that nuisance bars are identified through calls from neighbors or through criminal acts committed outside the bars. He stated that nuisance bars immediately get additional attention by patrol officers and are cited as often as possible. He stated that Police works with bar management to make improvements.

Chief Heim stated that officers use bars to make drug cases as able. He stated that the Department performed bar checks before the decrease in manpower. He stated that there is joint work with the PA LCE on enforcement but that many resources are needed to close nuisance bars.

Chief Heim stated that operations can be suspended temporarily pending hearing outcomes but generally hearings result in restrictions but not closure. He stated that if the restrictions are adhered to they go back to normal operations.

Chief Heim stated that citizen testimony weighs heavily with the Court and that this is the best approach.

Chief Heim stated that if the bar is closed, generally a new owner is somehow related to the former owner and the nuisance issues continue. He stated that many times owners are not on site and that managers are not well qualified.

Mr. Acosta stated that this discussion is in response to the Crime Summit. He stated that the District Attorney has stated that it is easier for him to close nuisance bars. He noted his concern that these bars are not closed and the effect on the neighborhoods. He noted his understanding of the decrease in manpower. Chief Heim stated that the District Attorney must build his case on problem bars with Police assistance to build cases.

Mr. Waltman noted the tool to revoke the bar's business license. He questioned if this approach was used. Chief Heim stated that it was not used and that the LCB regulations would probably over-ride the local regulations. Mr. Younger agreed.

Mr. Acosta questioned why Council was allowed to pass a law that was not in line with State law. Mr. Younger stated that it would apply to other businesses but not to bars.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that this is another tool in the toolbox. She stated that when she walks on Penn St she sees many who do not belong there but is unsure what laws are being broken. She stated that the City must be able to address these people. She stated that the City will never bring economic development downtown if this is the impression we leave on visitors. She noted the need for a plan.

Mr. Corcoran stated that he attended this afternoon's crime meeting. He stated that he learned that many victims are attacked because of their situation and that they are easy targets.

Mr. Waltman noted the need to revisit the BPL regulations. He noted the need for businesses to meet specific standards set by the City. He noted the need for the City to stand up for its principles.

Mr. Acosta stated that Lancaster and Harrisburg are more walkable. He stated that they do not have these same issues. He noted that Reading must be doing something wrong and noted the need to address the social issues.

Chief Heim stated that police have made many arrests but that no change has been seen. He stated that the Supreme Court has stricken loitering and panhandling laws.

Mr. Acosta stated that if this issue is not addressed, new economic development will not occur. He noted the need to remove the islands on Penn St. He suggested that other cities be called to see how they are handling the situation.

Chief Heim stated that a different mix of business is needed. He stated that the business community must bring this about and that a two-prong approach is needed – crime reduction and additional economic development.

Mr. Corcoran agreed and stated that investors will not come to downtown Reading in its current condition.

Mr. Marmarou stated that certain areas of downtown have been problematic in the past but noted the need for police to shoo loiterers.

The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by
Shelly Katzenmoyer, Deputy City Clerk